



# Thoreau Society Bulletin

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## 2006 ANNUAL GATHERING

MOUNTAINS, SEASHORES, AND  
MOONLIGHT: THOREAU'S  
EXPLORATION OF WILDNESS

JULY 6-9, 2006

CONCORD, MASSACHUSETTS

The Annual Gathering Committee is in need of volunteers to assist with the Gathering.

We'll need help with registration, setting up meeting rooms, hospitality, and a variety of other necessary tasks. If you can volunteer some time, please contact Jayne Gordon at 978-369-5319 or by email at [jayne.gordon@thoreausociety.org](mailto:jayne.gordon@thoreausociety.org).

Plan now to be in Concord for the 2006 Gathering!!!

## Editor's Note

As many of you know, the editor of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*, Bradley P. Dean, died on January 14, 2006. His death is a great loss to the world of Thoreau scholarship and to the many friends who are left behind. We plan a series of tributes for the next issue of the *Bulletin*.

The Board of Directors has begun a search to find a successor as editor of the *Bulletin*, but such a process takes time. Until we can name a new editor, I will act as interim editor. Please address all mail to 118 E. Sixth St., Ontario, CA 91764 and emails to [robert.hudspeth@cgu.edu](mailto:robert.hudspeth@cgu.edu).

As always, we solicit contributions to the *Bulletin* from its membership, so do feel free to make submissions. Finally, we regret the fact that we will not be able to adhere to the normal production schedule.

*Robert N. Hudspeth*

## "Grisly Steven": Thoreau's Dog-day Afternoon In Walden Woods

*Edmund A. Schofield*

In "Baker Farm" Thoreau describes an afternoon walk he took from his Walden house to Fair Haven Bay, there—not far from where he and Edward Hoar had accidentally set fire to the woods some sixteen months earlier—"to go a-fishing . . . to eke out [his] scanty fare of vegetables." In his *Journal* Thoreau tells us that he made the walk on Saturday afternoon, August 23, 1845, some seven weeks after he had moved to Walden. "By the way there came up a shower," he says in "Baker Farm," "which compelled me to stand half an hour under a pine, piling boughs over my head. . . . [W]hen at length I had made one cast over the pickerelweed," he continues, "I found myself suddenly in the shadow of a cloud, and the thunder began to rumble with such emphasis that I could do no more than listen to it. The gods must be proud, thought I, with such forked flashes to rout a poor unarmed fisherman. So I made haste for shelter to the nearest hut. . . ."

In this article I supply background evidence that virtually every statement Thoreau makes in this and nearby passages is literally true, using contemporary records of various kinds. This kind of fidelity to facts must be rare in literary works of the imagination, as opposed, for example, to biography and history.

Near the beginning of the *Journal* passage, but not in *Walden*, Thoreau notes that "the rain came on again," suggesting that it had rained earlier in the day, even before he had set out for Fair Haven. Contemporary weather records and newspaper accounts amply show that this was indeed the case. In fact, there had been a series of showers over the previous three days, and reports of powerful thunderstorms as far away as New York City and Maine.

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The Boston *Courier* reported on August 28<sup>th</sup> that an "intense drought in this vicinity, that has continued almost without interruption for more than six weeks, was broken on Wednesday last [i.e., August 20<sup>th</sup>] by copious and refreshing showers of rain, that were repeated at intervals until Saturday." (Actually, however, drought had plagued eastern Massachusetts for significantly longer than six weeks.<sup>2</sup>) Thus, by Saturday, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, there had been off-and-on rain in the Concord area for three days.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> began as a typical summer "dog day" in Massachusetts, the last in a series of such days. At the same time, the rains of that week were bringing to an end a severe six-week drought.<sup>3</sup> On that day, especially over the northern half of the state—from west of the Connecticut River to Plymouth and Bristol counties—two stupendous outbursts of thunder and lightning cut devastating swaths the entire length of the state, one early in the morning and one late in the afternoon, in both instances moving roughly from the west-northwest to the east-southeast in a relatively narrow band.<sup>4</sup> Both of them swept through the Middlesex town of Littleton, which lies only ten miles northwest of Walden, causing several fires there.

By the time the day's onslaughts had ended, woods had been set afire "in several places;" two people had been killed by lightning and four others stunned but not killed; a large ox, a calf, four cows, two heifers, and at least two horses were killed; and nine barns (one containing 25 tons of hay), a hotel, a cotton-drying establishment, and other buildings were struck and burned. These are minimum tallies. Countless other bolts of lightning struck but did not kill animals or people; yet others struck but did not destroy buildings.

During the afternoon downpour and pummeling, Thoreau was either standing at the base of a tall pine tree in Walden Woods (unwisely, it would seem) or else enjoying the shelter of John Field's humble hovel.

In the northern Worcester County town of Westminster, which is situated some 25 miles northwest of Walden, the house of Isaac Seaver was struck that morning. A "young lady named Nancy Perry, 14 years old, . . . [was] instantly killed. Mrs. Seaver was knocked down by the fluid [i.e., the lightning], but [was] not dangerously injured."<sup>5</sup>

Nearby South Gardner, too, bore the brunt of violent thunderstorms that morning. According to Lewis H. Bradford in a letter to the *Massachusetts Spy*: "This morning at five o'clock we had a terrific storm accompanied by thunder and lightning, and for nearly two hours our beautiful village was completely surrounded by thunder and lightning, the rain pouring down in torrents, and the fluid [lightning] striking houses, shops, barns, and trees, in fearful succession. A house owned by Mr David White was struck but no one injured except being almost stunned with the explosion. A chair shop, occupied by Hubbard Kendall, was struck and set on fire doing some little damage. A barn in Templeton, three miles west, occupied by Mr Stockwell was struck and consumed, and the woods, also, were set on fire in several places. . . . The lightning struck the meetinghouse in Templeton, and also several houses."<sup>6</sup>

In Littleton, which lies a mere ten miles northwest of Walden, two barns were struck by lightning on Saturday morning "and with their contents entirely consumed."<sup>7</sup> "Two cows were killed at the same time."<sup>8</sup> Later that day, "The 'Tremont Hotel' in Littleton, was struck by lightning on Saturday afternoon, and nearly destroyed,"<sup>9</sup> "together with all

the buildings connected therewith. . . ."<sup>10</sup> It was this second electrical assault on Littleton that Thoreau would soon encounter at Fair Haven, and its severity (there and elsewhere) shows the danger Thoreau was in—especially when he was standing for "half an hour under a pine." Perhaps the very "forked flashes" Thoreau mentions marked the moment of the Tremont Hotel's fiery demise only ten miles away.

After passing over Fair Haven the line of thunderstorms moved into Newton, Boston, Dorchester, and Hingham, doing the extensive damage in those places described in several Boston newspapers, and also in Bristol County.

For example, the Boston *Traveller* of August 25<sup>th</sup> carried the following report on the afternoon onslaught: "THUNDER SHOWER.—After a week of the most insupportable weather which even this summer has afforded us, we were visited on Saturday P.M. with a long continued and severe thunder storm. The thunder was very heavy and the lightning vivid. . . . At about five o'clock the Iron Shears on the wharf of Messrs. Hinckley & Drury, on Front street, were struck and considerable damage was done to the wood work, although no person was hurt. In Dorchester, about 7 o'clock, the cotton drying establishment of Oliver Tenn[e]y was struck, set on fire, and considerably burned; and in the same town, as Mr. Welch, butcher of Roxbury, was driving his cart across Little Neck, his horse was struck by a flash of lightning and instantly killed, while Mr. W. escaped uninjured. Two houses [sic]<sup>11</sup> were also struck in Hingham, and more or less injured. A gentleman was knocked down in West Newton, and rendered insensible, but was recovered by the free use of cold water, and did not seem to have received any serious injury."<sup>12</sup>

In Hingham, a coastal town on Boston's near South Shore, the local *Patriot* newspaper reported that "The rain poured down in torrents, and the thunder and lightning were most terrific. Peal after peal followed each other in quick succession, and the heavens appeared as if one continual blaze. The 'oldest inhabitant' states that it was without parallel.

The house occupied by Mr Z[iba]. Chessman, in Hersey-street, was struck—the fluid entering the chimney, passing down to the fire-place, destroying the mantel-piece, and then escaping near the window. One of Mr Chessman's children was severely stunned, but not killed, as has been reported. . . ."<sup>13</sup>

The New Bedford *Mercury* reported "that the storm, on Saturday afternoon, was very severe at Taunton, having no parallel 'in the memory of the oldest inhabitant.' The Bristol Print Works were struck with lightning, but were not materially damaged."<sup>14</sup>

The *Bristol County Democrat, and Independent Gazette*, under the headline "ANOTHER TREMENDOUS RAIN STORM," reported that "On Saturday afternoon last we were visited with another great rain, accompanied with sharp lightning and heavy thunder. We think we never before saw so much water descend in the space of two hours: . . .

The lightning struck in several places not far off, but we hear of damage only in the following instances. A barn belonging to Mr. Thomas Stone, in the east part of Norton, was struck and consumed. A horse belonging to Mr. Galen Sylvester of Easton was killed. In North Bridgewater, Mr. Daniel Britt,<sup>15</sup> was killed while walking from his field to his house. Another gentleman accompanying him was knocked down, but recovered."<sup>16</sup>

The Hingham *Patriot*, quoting from the Plymouth *Rock*, cites the following detail about Mr. Brett's demise: "The fluid struck



him on the back part of the neck, severing the flesh as if cut with a sharp knife."

The newspaper accounts are supplemented by exacting meteorological records made in Framingham, Boston, South Boston, Cambridge, Charlestown, Salem, Ipswich, Canton, New Bedford, Worcester, Northampton, and Amherst. These help us to trace the courses of the storms and pinpoint to within minutes the exact times of their passage through these localities.

Here, I will focus on the afternoon storm, however, since that was the one that occurred when Thoreau was en route to Fair Haven, using in particular the records of Gustavus Adolphus Hyde (1826–1912) of Saxonville, the nearest site for which such data exist.<sup>17</sup> Saxonville, a village of the town of Framingham situated only eight miles south of Walden, lies upstream on the same Sudbury River of which Fair Haven is an embayment. This seemingly pointless exercise in minutiae will serve, perhaps, to show the degree to which Thoreau relies upon objective reality as the raw material of *Walden*—that is, the extent to which he conscientiously used the phenomena of the Actual World in which he lived to reflect or point to the Ideal World he so fervently wanted to know: causing facts to flower in truths. This approach to concrete facts in the service of ideality is the very essence of Transcendentalism.

In the "Remarks" column of his record for August 23<sup>rd</sup>, Hyde entered the following information: "Rain AM. Cloudy with heavy shower. Sharp lightning & heavy thunder." In his "Rain" column Hyde notes that the morning rain ended in Saxonville at 10:30; 0.20 inch of rain fell. This must have been the storm that killed Nancy Perry earlier that morning in Westminster and that caused two barns to burn in Littleton. The "Rain" column notes that 1.10 inch of rain fell at Saxonville between 6:15 and 7:00 P.M. Under "Remarks" Hyde notes a "Shower at N. at 5 and 1 at S. at 6 PM." The first afternoon shower, that at five o'clock, is undoubtedly the one during which Thoreau sought shelter under the pine tree (recall that Walden is only eight miles north of Saxonville). The six o'clock shower, which might have been the one that would kill Daniel Brett in North Bridgewater, gave Saxonville 1.10 inches of rain. It arrived at Fair Haven just as Thoreau had made "one cast over the pickerelweed," only to find himself "suddenly in the shadow of a cloud"—"the thunder gan romblen in the heaven with . . . grisly steven."

Observations by others give the following times for the late-afternoon thunderstorms in Boston: 5:00 to 7:00 P.M. (data of Enoch Hale); afternoon (data of Robert Treat Paine: "rain & thunder a[fternoon]"); between 5 and 7 (data of James Jackson, manuscript weather journal, Houghton Library ["heavy rain w<sup>th</sup> severe th— & lg"]); 5 to 7 ("Showers 5 to 7. heavy Thund<sup>r</sup>, Light<sup>s</sup> & rain").

If we compare the data of observers in the path of the late-afternoon rains with Thoreau's account in "Baker Farm," we will find that virtually all of them agree in assigning, first, an approximately hour-long downpour followed by a violent thunder and lightning storm for the period between 5:00 and 7:00 P.M. Using only the meteorological records and newspaper accounts we can thus propose the following plausible itinerary for Thoreau: he left his Walden house at sometime around 4:30, possibly just after 4:00; stood beneath the pine tree for half an hour or so between 5:00 and 6:00; proceeded to Fair Haven just

in time for the thunderstorm to sweep through, retreating to John Field's house at about 6:00. He then left Field's house for Fair Haven, where he (and Field—who had joined him) fished; to the east a rainbow hovered over the "eastern woods" (*i.e.*, Walden Woods), promising "a fair evening," and the sky was reddening in the west. He must have felt he had to run in order to do some fishing in before it became too dark to see; sunset would have occurred within minutes of 6:30 P.M.

The exact time of sunset does not take into account "twilight," however. On August 23<sup>rd</sup> in the Concord area astronomical twilight<sup>18</sup> would have begun at about 8:15 P.M. Including in Thoreau's "afternoon" all of civil twilight would bring "sunset," broadly defined as a process with duration rather than as an instant in time, to about 7:30. He and Field would have been able to see well enough during civil twilight to fish until eight o'clock or so. Thoreau does not indicate whether they continued fishing after dark.

With almost any other writer the foregoing kind of reconstruction of the writer's itinerary on a particular afternoon would be pointless, even ludicrous. In the case of a Transcendentalist like Thoreau, however, it goes to the very core of the Transcendentalist worldview that informed his life and writing: again, facts flowering in truths. Nature was important in that worldview, but more particularly, as does Idealism in general, Transcendentalism holds that the fleeting world in which we live—the Actual—reflects the eternal Real and indeed is an emanation of the Real. Knowing the Actual helps us apprehend the Real, however "darkly," and the more faithfully we honor facts the clearer our view of the ideal. This is what Thoreau was about during his entire career as a writer. Though he occasionally erred in his use of facts, usually without realizing it, he took pains to maintain their integrity. He never dealt fast and loose with them. Knowing this, we can "prove" Thoreau's prose by a multitude of "tests."

In subsequent articles I hope to demonstrate this assertion by examining other segments of Thoreau's writings, often through the use of research tools and resources that have become more readily available to scholars over the past two decades.

<sup>14</sup>"[T]he thunder gan romblen in the heaven with . . . grisly steven," Thoreau says in the *Journal* passage, paraphrasing Chaucer's *The Legend of Good Women*.

<sup>18</sup>In "Economy" Thoreau writes (PE: 18), "I have watered the red huckleberry, the sand cherry, and the nettle tree . . . which might have withered else in dry seasons." The first two species, *Gaylussacia baccata* forma *leucocarpa* and *Prunus susquehanae*, are well known in the Concord area, the last (*Celtis occidentalis*) not so well known. Ray Angelo, in "Two Thoreau Letters at Harvard," *Thoreau Society Bulletin* 162 (Winter 1983): 1–2, published a letter by Thoreau, or more properly, a note, listing the contents of a box Thoreau was mailing to the horticulturist Benjamin Marston Watson of Plymouth, in which all three of these species are mentioned. The note is dated August 5, 1845—which places it in the middle of the "intense drought" mentioned by the *Courier*. The first two species would have grown at Walden, near Thoreau's house, the sand cherry "within a rod" of it, Thoreau writes; the third, *Celtis occidentalis* (common hackberry, or nettle-tree), Angelo says Thoreau knew only from Nashawtuc Hill in Concord, where "only a few small trees" grew in his day. (Consistent with Angelo's observation, *C. occidentalis* is not mentioned in the *Journal* passage [*J*. 1:435, Walden Edition] upon which this passage in *Walden* is based.)

This, as well as other kinds of evidence, suggests that Thoreau had moved to Walden during a drought dating back at least two years, and



that at about the time he took up residence at Walden the drought had become especially severe. See, for example, my “‘Burnt Woods’: Ecological Insights into Thoreau’s Unhappy Encounter with Forest Fire,” *Thoreau Research Newsletter*, Volume 2, Number 3 (July 1991), pages 1–8, for details about the prolonged drought, which in fact affected much of the northeastern United States. The rains that occurred at around the time of this “Baker Farm” episode broke the summer drought that had welcomed Thoreau to Walden in early July. Had drought continued it is possible that “The Bean-Field” chapter of *Walden* could never have been written—and indeed, that “Economy” would be a very different chapter from what it is—because the porous, rapidly draining soils of the Walden area become exceedingly dry during high summer even in ordinary growing seasons, and there would have been no bean crop to speak of in 1845.

<sup>3</sup>In spite of the series of refreshing showers that had fallen over the previous three days, August 23<sup>rd</sup>, says the Boston *Courier*, began as “another extremely hot, sultry, disagreeable day”—i.e., it was a “dog day” (Boston *Courier*, August 25, 1845, page [2]). The Boston *Traveller* of the same date (page [2]) complained of “a week of the most insupportable weather,” and Samuel Blake of South Boston noted in his manuscript meteorological journal (page 84) that “we have had this season very warm, —sultry dog-day weather” (microfilm in the National Archives and Records Administration, Northeast Records Center, Waltham, Mass.). In Salem, William Archer reported “another complete dog day, very, and disagreeable” (“Diary of William Archer, 1844–47,” Peabody–Essex Museum), while in Framingham and Boston observers recorded frequent fog, “heavy,” and “thick, muggy” weather during the previous week.

<sup>4</sup>The line of storms, both early morning and late afternoon, swept out of southwestern New Hampshire into northwestern Worcester County, Mass., and from there across central Middlesex County to northern Plymouth County—a distance of over 100 miles—in a band that was not much more than fifteen or twenty miles wide. The powerful storms apparently did not affect Salem or Ipswich to the north or Northampton, Amherst, Worcester, or New Bedford to the south, although those places did receive rain.

<sup>5</sup>Postscript to a letter of L. H. Bradford, dated “SOUTH GARDNER, Aug. 23,” and published in the *Massachusetts Spy*, August 27, 1845, page [3]. Her death is recorded in Westminster’s vital records as follows: “PERRY, Nancy, d. Joseph and Sally, Aug. 24 [sic], 1845, a. 13 y. 6 m. 20 d. Killed by lightning” (*Vital Records of Westminster, Massachusetts, to the End of the Year 1849*. Worcester: Franklin P. Rice, 1908. Page 242.)

<sup>6</sup>Letter of August 23, 1845, *Massachusetts Spy*, August 27, 1845, page [3].

<sup>7</sup>Lowell *Daily Courier*, August 27, 1845, page 2.

<sup>8</sup>The *Freeman* (Concord, Mass.), August 29, 1845, page [2].

<sup>9</sup>*Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup>Worcester *Daily Spy*, August 26, 1845, page 2, column 3, lower middle, and quoted by several other newspapers. I am indebted to Mr. Russell L. Martin, III, of the American Antiquarian Society (MWA) for kindly interceding in my behalf with the State Historical Society of Wisconsin to obtain a transcript of the *Spy*’s report on the Tremont House fire carried in its August 26, 1845, issue, which MWA does not have.

<sup>11</sup>Horses? The immediate context here suggests that two horses were “also struck in Hingham,” but the article in the *Hingham Patriot* quoted below mentions only two houses being struck.

<sup>12</sup>Boston *Traveller*, August 25, 1845, page [2].

<sup>13</sup>Hingham *Patriot*, August 29, 1845, page 2.

<sup>14</sup>As quoted in the Boston *Evening Transcript*, August 25, 1845, page [2].

<sup>15</sup>His surname is properly spelled “Brett.” In the vital records of Brockton his death is recorded as follows: “BRETT, Daniel, killed by lightning, Aug. 23, 1845, a. 63,” according to <www.newenglandancestors.org> (accessed on March 9, 2006).

<sup>16</sup>August 29, 1845, page [2].

<sup>17</sup>Hyde began keeping weather records in February 1843, in response to a call by James Pollard Espy (1785–1860) of the Smithsonian Institution, who was studying the formation and progress of storms and needed information from many locations around the country. For several years Hyde made observations for Espy in Saxonville, which placed him closer to Walden than anyone else who was active at the time of Thoreau’s residence there. Unfortunately, significant gaps occur in his observations after 1843 “by reason of changes in residence and business interferences” (G. A. Hyde, brief autobiographical sketch written at the request of, and published in, *Monthly Weather Review*, May 1901, page 220). In the mid-1850s Hyde moved to Cleveland, where he lived out the rest of his long life, becoming Cleveland’s *de facto* “official” weather observer. His observations for Saxonville survive in the National Archives in Washington, D. C., and in the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland; for a number of months both of the repositories have records for the same months, but for the most part their holdings do not overlap. Hyde’s observations for August 1845 are in Cleveland.

<sup>18</sup>Almanacs list three types of twilight: “civil twilight,” when the center of the sun’s disk is six degrees below the astronomical horizon and it is possible to read a newspaper without artificial light; “nautical twilight,” when the center of the disk is twelve degrees below the horizon and the bright stars that navigators use are visible; and “astronomical twilight,” when the center of the disk is eighteen degrees below the horizon and astronomical studies can proceed, at least away from the point where the sun set. When the sun is twenty-four degrees below the horizon, “no part of the observer’s atmosphere, even toward the sun, receives any sunlight” (*The World Almanac and Book of Facts 1996*, pages 294 and 295); by this time it would be pitch black.

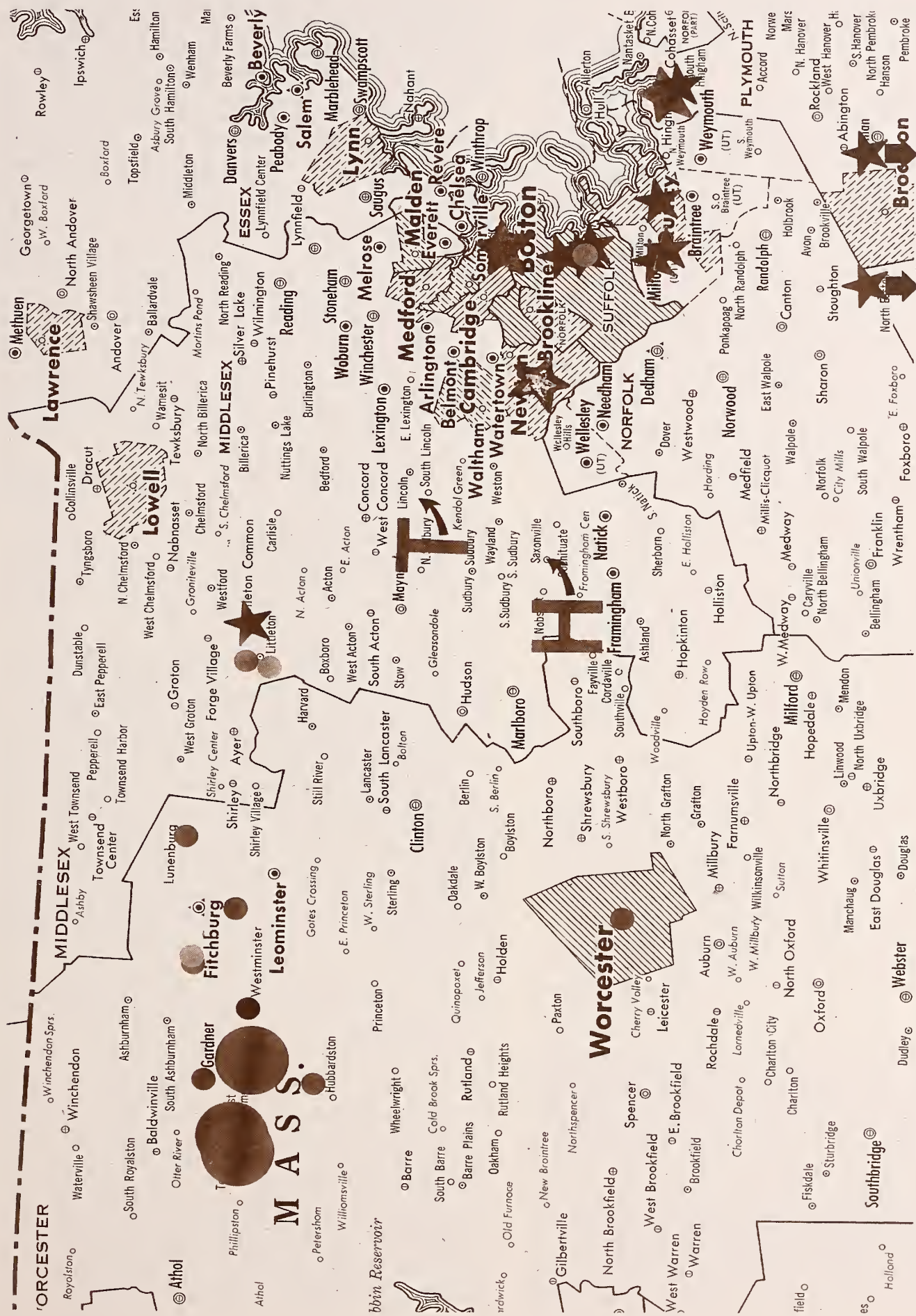
The map of Eastern Massachusetts on p. 5 shows some of the lightning strikes and the resulting damage on Saturday, August 23, 1845. Based upon newspaper accounts. The letter “T” and the accompanying arrow show Thoreau’s location in Walden Woods; “H” indicates the location of G. A. Hyde in Saxonville. Circles indicate morning lightning events; stars indicate afternoon events. Large dark circles: buildings struck; lighter large circle: woods fire. Small dark circles: for Westminster, death of Nancy Perry; elsewhere, buildings struck or livestock killed. Solid stars: buildings struck. Larger solid stars: buildings struck and burned (not necessarily destroyed). Outlined star: man stunned but not killed. Stars with arrows (lower right): lightning strikes in Taunton (left, Bristol Print Works) and North Bridgewater (right, Mr. Daniel Brett killed), both outside the area of the map. Since there are inconsistencies and ambiguities in the various newspaper accounts the map can give only a general impression of the pattern of lightning strikes. In addition, the original of the map is in color; thus some distinctions (e.g., humans, livestock, buildings struck, buildings burned, deaths) are lost in this black-and-white rendering.

## Thoreau Writes about Writing in his Journal

I should like to meet the great and serene sentence—which does not reveal itself—only that it is great. —which I may never with my utmost intelligence pierce through and beyond—(more than the earth itself)—which no intelligence can understand— There should be a kind of life and palpitation to it—under its rind a kind of blood should circulate forever—communicating freshness to its countenance.

March 15, 1842







# The Story of a Collection

Leslie Perrin Wilson

In 1990, assisted by generous private donations, the Concord Free Public Library Corporation purchased a rich collection primarily of Concord-related manuscript and printed material from the Harvard (Massachusetts) Historical Society. Acquired by the society from the estate of Winnifred L. Sturdy, this collection was unprocessed and largely unavailable for research use in Concord until late in 2003, when, ensconced in a trailer in West Concord during library renovations, I found time to organize, arrange, and prepare a descriptive finding aid for it.

The Sturdy Collection includes items ranging in date from 1663 to 1951—Concord personal and family papers, among them papers of Concord historian, antiquarian, and genealogist George Tolman and his son Adams Tolman; the records of a number of Concord organizations; and some town records as well. As I sorted through seemingly unrelated materials and worked to understand how they had come together, the degree to which the histories of collections are intertwined with the biographies of the people who assemble and acquire them struck me. Three lives—George Tolman's, Adams Tolman's, and Winnifred Sturdy's—provide context and substance to the story of the Sturdy Collection.

Born in Roxbury in 1836, George Tolman was a brilliant, complex, difficult man. He got into trouble while a student at Harvard and failed to graduate with his class. He made a living first in Detroit as a freight clerk for the Michigan Central Railroad, and was later employed in Boston by the Boston and Worcester Railroad. He worked as an actor, a newspaper correspondent, and eventually as editor of the *New England Farmer*. He married Elizabeth Bartlett Adams in 1861, and raised a family in Concord.

When, after twenty-five years, George Tolman left the *New England Farmer*, he permanently abandoned any regular source of income—a fact that made for unstable finances and constrained his children's opportunities. He subsequently devoted himself to research in Concord history and genealogy, which, however dear to him, was not a very remunerative occupation.

Tolman made major contributions to local history here. He painstakingly recorded the inscriptions on the gravestones in the Hill and Main Street burying grounds. He transcribed and indexed town records, and was in large part responsible for the compilation of the printed volume of Concord births, marriages, and deaths up to 1850. He served as secretary of the Concord Antiquarian Society (now known as the Concord Museum), and in that capacity delivered thoughtful papers drawing on his command of facts and sources. (Some of these—including *John Jack, the Slave, and Daniel Bliss, the Tory*, "*Graves and Worms and Epitaphs*," and *Events of April Nineteenth*—were published by the society.) He also compiled a catalog of the society's holdings, published in 1911.

The elder Tolman understood the value of primary documentation, and took advantage of every opportunity to expand his store of local knowledge through it. He dug for information in Concord town records and in Boston-area collections, some of them privately held. When he came across manuscript items that he wished to purchase on Concord's behalf,

he was thwarted by his own inability to do so and by difficulty in raising money from others for the purpose. His frustration was only partially offset by the access he personally was granted to study and take notes from documents not generally available to others.

Tolman's plan was to transform the raw material provided by his research into a Concord history, but he was unable to find a patron willing to subvent such a project. His pride got the better of him, and, yielding to that peevish possessiveness that sometimes casts a shadow over local history, he destroyed a large part of his notes and papers. He died in 1909.

As Edward Waldo Emerson's Social Circle memoir of Adams Tolman indicates, the younger Tolman learned from his father not only to respect historical detail and accuracy, but also—by negative example—to regard himself more as a steward than an owner of historical documentation and information. Less prideful and impulsive than George Tolman, he was also better able to adapt himself to financial realities. He approached Concord history as an avocation, and diligently supported himself and his small family through employment at the Middlesex Mutual Fire Insurance Company.

George Tolman was not his son's only role model in local matters. While Adams was growing up, the Tolman family lived first in and then next to the Main Street home (the present 255 Main) of Sophia Thoreau, younger sister of Henry David Thoreau, who had died there in 1862. Under her influence, Adams was drawn to collect botanical and other natural specimens, and to search for Native American implements, as Henry Thoreau had earlier done. Young Tolman consulted Thoreau's manuscript journals to locate wildflowers about which the author had written. He also developed an uncanny ability to find arrowheads, and eventually gathered a major collection of Concord-area Indian artifacts. (Originally deposited in the Concord Free Public Library, Tolman's artifact collection was transferred to the Concord Antiquarian Museum in 1990.)

Adams Tolman succeeded his father as secretary of the Concord Antiquarian Society, and continued George Tolman's efforts to transcribe and index Concord manuscripts and documents. But because he had a steady income and fewer dependents than his father had had, he was also able to purchase some Concord materials as they came up for sale. When he died in 1920, he left a sizeable collection of Concord-related items in the care of his widow. Harriet Giles Tolman outlived her husband by two decades. Her final years were spent as a tenant on Lexington Road, in the present 245/249, a property purchased in 1939 by Winnifred Sturdy of Harvard.

Born in Harvard in 1890, Winnifred Louise Bryant Sturdy was an active member and benefactor of a variety of organizations in her native town. She graduated from the Bromfield School, attended the Fitchburg Normal School, and lived and worked in Washington, D.C. before marrying Harry Sturdy and moving back to Harvard. She was an avid, prize-winning gardener, an inveterate collector, and a long-time president of the Harvard Historical Society. At her death in 1981, she left the society the papers and records that she apparently had either acquired from the elderly Harriet Giles Tolman or had simply gathered from her Lexington Road property after that lady's death. Mindful of the local scope of its collecting mission, the society later offered the Concord materials left to it by Mrs. Sturdy—items that internal



evidence reveals had belonged to Adams Tolman—for sale to the Concord Free Public Library.

Remarkable manuscript treasures came back to Concord with the library's purchase of the Sturdy Collection. Highlights include the subscription list for Lemuel Shattuck's 1835 *A History of the Town of Concord* (which shows that Ralph Waldo Emerson was the largest subscriber for copies of that book), records of the Middlesex Agricultural Society and its predecessors, of the Concord Fire Society, the Concord Lyceum, and the Concord Mill Dam Company (a 19<sup>th</sup> century real estate development corporation), and a file of records documenting the 1859 Massachusetts militia encampment here.

The story of the Sturdy Collection hints at the range of motives—from pride in history, to informed commitment to documentation, to sheer pleasure in owning unique items—operative in the accumulation of historical materials by private collectors. Crucial though the role of individuals has been in assembling and transmitting this collection, however, it would be difficult to argue that there is a better place for it than in a publicly accessible research facility. Ultimately, research usefulness is the most powerful justification for building and maintaining collections, and provides the strongest assurance of their preservation.

To access the online finding aid for the Sturdy Collection, go to [www.concordnet.org/library](http://www.concordnet.org/library), then click to Special Collections, then to Finding Aids, then to the Sturdy Collection. This article first appeared in the Concord Journal.

## A Fund To Honor Bradley P. Dean

Friends and colleagues of Brad Dean have established the Bradley P. Dean Memorial Fund for the development of the Special Collections pages of the Concord Free Public Library website. It is to be used at the discretion of the Curator of Special Collections for the purchase of software, expertise, or other expenses related to web development, and especially for the development of pages that incorporate and interpret primary documentation. Donations to the fund should be made out to the Concord Free Public Library Corporation, marked in the memo line as designated for the Dean Fund, and sent to: Development Office, Concord Free Public Library, 129 Main Street, Concord, MA 01742. All pages created with Dean Memorial money will acknowledge use of the fund.

## A Possible Source for Walden

Phil Howerton

The July 1848 issue of *The Union Magazine of Literature and Art* has secured a place in American literary history because it contains, among its mostly forgettable selections, the first installment of Henry David Thoreau's "Ktaadn, and the Maine Woods." On page nine of that issue, a passage appears that foreshadows the language and themes of *Walden*, which was published six years later: "I like also to reduce my wants to the lowest terms, to see how little is absolutely essential, and how much can be dispensed with without causing positive unhappiness. It is a kind of experiment, however, that is not likely to become popular, though in my own case I have found it extremely

beneficial." Although Thoreauvian in spirit and phrasing, these words do not belong to Thoreau; rather, they were written by Ann E. C. Lynch, an occasional author and popular hostess in New York social circles.

Obviously, Lynch's passage discusses Thoreau's themes of simplicity and self reliance, and, more minutely, Lynch's passage is echoed in Thoreau's word choice and phrasing. Several of the key words in Lynch's passage appear several times in *Walden*. For example, as shown by Odgen and Keller in *Walden: A Concordance, essential* appears seven times, and *experiment* appears eleven times. These examples of Thoreau's word choice cannot be attributed to the influence of Lynch because they appear in the first draft of *Walden*, which was written in 1846-47. Interestingly, however, Thoreau's use of one phrase, *lowest terms*, may have been prompted by his reading Lynch's article. This phrase does not appear in the first version of *Walden* but does appear in the final version in the oft-quoted paragraph explaining why Thoreau went to the woods: "I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms."

Admittedly, this is a rather minor observation, and this word choice might be dismissed as mere coincidence if not for the sequence in which Lynch's article and "Ktaadn" were published. What is fascinating is that this phrasing did not appear in the *Walden* manuscript before the publication of Lynch's essay and that Thoreau may have encountered her essay as he viewed his first installment of "Ktaadn." Although we do know that Thoreau possessed a copy of the July issue of *The Union Magazine*, it would be difficult to prove that he read Lynch's essay. Thoreau's copy of the published "Ktaadn," complete with corrections made in his own hand, is among his papers in the Berg Collection in the New York Public Library; however, this essay has been extracted from the magazine in which it appeared.

It is probable that Thoreau read Lynch's article, for he was a voracious reader of travel literature. Lynch tells of her excursion to view picturesque countryside and to view the sublimity of Niagara Falls, and she explains how she took her meals and slept nights on a canal boat as she walked nearly eighty miles to the Falls. In short, Lynch engages several topics dear to Thoreau, such as walking, the picturesque, the sublime, communion with nature, and the recitation of poetry.

This textual observation, of course, will not prompt a re-reading of *Walden*, but it may possibly add a text to the list of possible sources of *Walden*.

## From Thoreau's Journal, June 19, 1852

Facts collected by a poet are set down at last as winged seeds of truth—samarae—tinged with his expectation. O may my words be verdurous & sempiternal as the hills. Facts fall from the poetic observer as ripe seeds.



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## Thoreau Society Presentations at 2005 ALA Conference

The American Literature Association held its annual conference in Cambridge, Massachusetts, May 2005. The following are abstracts of the presentations of the sessions sponsored by the Thoreau Society.

### Session 1: Thoreau and Global Civil Society

Moderated by Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, Penn State Altoona

#### Wai Chee Dimock (Yale University) "Thoreau on Three Continents"

This paper looks at the literary culture of Concord, Massachusetts as an instance of a civil society extending across the globe. Thoreau's reading of the *Bhagavad Gita*—his extension and inversion of that Sanskrit poem—shaped his thinking about pacifism and abolitionism in the nineteenth century. His essay, "Resistance to Civil Government," in turn contributed to Gandhi's thinking, first implemented in South Africa before becoming the nonviolent resistance movement—Satyagraha—in India. A community of readers, at once nonmilitary and nongovernmental, extends for thousands of years and thousands of miles.

#### Peter Bellis (Miami University) "Thinking Globally, Acting Individually"

At the heart of Jurgen Habermas' public sphere is the "traffic in commodities and news," made regular and "public" through

newspapers and journals. This confluence of the political and the economic, I argue, makes Thoreau deeply skeptical of the antebellum public sphere. He enters that sphere—as writer and lecturer—but only with a marked ambivalence, so that he can insist on a withdrawal from it.

In *Walden*, Thoreau notes the increasing global traffic in both goods and information, but steps aside from the flow of commerce and the circulation of news, which he often derides as mere gossip. In his antislavery essays and lectures, he attacks what he terms "the rule of expediency" in dealing with issues of morality and human rights, for the concerns of "expediency" are solely those of legal and commercial exchange. The problem, however, is that the discourse of "expediency" is not just that of government and the courts—it is that of civil society and the public sphere as well. Treating slavery within the public sphere is to reduce it too to the level of expediency—the matter of its "constitutionality" is no different from its "profitability." The only possibility for reform, he repeatedly insists, is to "disassociate" ourselves from slavery, to "withdraw" and wash our hands of it—and of civil society as well. For Thoreau, unlike Martin Luther King, "self-purification" through withdrawal is the only form of nonviolent moral action available. Without King's faith in the persistence and vitality of civil society, Thoreau can only call for disengagement and a turn from discourse to violence.

### Session 2: Teaching Thoreau's Natural History

#### Essays: A Roundtable

Moderated by Sandra Harbert Petrulionis, Penn State Altoona

#### Michael Ziser (University of California Davis)

One way to teach students about the connection between Thoreau's political polemics and his natural history essays is to teach the political tracts *as* natural history essays. The famous white water-lily passage at the end of "Slavery in Massachusetts" affords an opportunity to do so in a way that employs the methods of close reading, deconstruction, and historicism. Appearing at first glance to be a clear statement of the natural realm's absolute difference from the debased politics of the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas-Nebraska Act, a more careful reading of the symbolic logic of the water-lily/river-muck pairing in the essay reveals that it depends on a decompositional model of history in which the "slime" of moral decay and the white lily of moral perfection are understood to be in a dynamic, mutually sustaining relationship to one another. The journals which contain long descriptions of and meditations on the form of the lily (described by Asa Gray as an imperceptible shift from sepals to petals to stamens), its vulnerability to insects, its connection to the soil of the river, and the significance of its edible root provide students with a natural history of the ethical position articulated in the essay of 1854 and present Thoreau as a "muckraker" in both the literal and figurative senses of the word.

#### Audrey Raden (CUNY)

It is not a coincidence when Thoreau says that both the leaves of the scarlet oak and John Brown and his men, "Teach us how to die." Throughout his work Thoreau examines the multifarious physical and psychic permutations of death. Into this alert anticipation of death, Thoreau comes to anticipate his own early death. His personal experiences bring him to the conclusion that a



man can die a poor death or a good death. His own physically debilitating experiences both after the death of his brother in 1842 and the publication of *Walden* in 1854 exemplify a poor death, in which isolated from nature he experiences melancholy and an inability to walk, observe, or write. In the eighteen months leading up to his actual death he is in the observant, ecstatic state of his earliest experiences of nature, and busily writing into his last weeks. This good death is one that is modeled on death in nature.

A rhetoric of death and heroism unite all of Thoreau's late essays. A man is as capable of a ripe fading into death as an autumn leaf. Thoreau exemplifies this in his characterization of John Brown, who, in his willingness to die for a principle that will bring new life to an enslaved people, shows the same ripeness as the apples and autumn leaves that, with their beauty, show their willingness to die for the nourishment of the future.

In *Walden* Thoreau accounts for the inevitable violence and death of nature in its "strong appetite and inviolable health." "Sometimes it has rained flesh and blood," yet "the impression made on the wise man that of universal innocence." In "The Succession of Forest Trees" Thoreau enlarges this understanding to the active role death plays in the lives of not only individual organisms but entire species as well. A forest falls in order for a different forest to rise. *Walden* ends with the exhortation to "build then your own world." In willingly participating in this heroic natural death, one shares in the constant world-building of nature.

#### Lance Newman (California State University San Marcos)

Henry David Thoreau's interest in empirical natural history remained largely undeveloped until 1849, when his relationship with Emerson cooled, and he increasingly represented the natural and human worlds as integrated and concrete. His thinking about natural and human history developed in parallel until, in his final years, he connected issues of environmental and social justice into a synthetic materialist critique of capitalism. Moreover, rather than remain satisfied with believing alternative ideas, he began to experiment with strategies for intervening materially to change the society around him.

Parallel readings of Thoreau's natural history and political essays support this claim. In his first decade as a nature writer, his main concern was to make natural facts flower into Transcendental truths. But in his late natural history essays, he not only produced materialist accounts of Massachusetts flora, he also envisioned a utopian alternative to capitalism, an organic community living in daily communion with the physical body of the land. This increasingly materialist understanding of natural history is mirrored in his essays on political economy, which move from an emphasis on individual morality to a focus on the aggregate moral effects of social and economic relationships. A similar movement from orthodox Emersonian moralism toward more radical politics can be seen in the abolition essays, which begin by accepting the logic of moral suasion but eventually recognize that ideas about reform become a force for change in the world only when they inspire people to take direct action.

In short, as Thoreau moved increasingly toward a materialist understanding of nature, he applied this same mode of analysis to the capitalist social order. He moved away from Transcendental idealism and organic individualism, becoming not only the scientific ecologist we see in the late natural history manuscripts but a political radical as well.

#### Bradley P. Dean

In his March 1844 lecture on reformers, Thoreau argued the thesis "False relations grow out of false conditions," from which it follows that to enjoy "an original relation to the universe" one must improve one's condition, one of the principal concerns of *Walden*. In the late summer of 1849 Thoreau encountered the assertion (in Edward Desor's "The Ocean and Its Meaning in Nature") that the full meaning of the ocean can only be comprehended by studying both "the Ocean in its history and ... development" (its condition through time) and "its present form and ... actual condition" (its present condition). Shortly after reading the essay, Thoreau enacted Desor's dictum by researching the natural and civil history of Cape Cod in anticipation of his October 1849 visit to the Cape with Ellery Channing. The ontological idea of "condition" and the epistemological idea of "relations" in socio-political and natural contexts offer productive points of entry into the complementary nature of Thoreau's reform and natural history essays.

#### Edmund A. Schofield (Tower Hill Botanic Garden)

I argue that Thoreau's "natural history" essays should be taught within the context of the entire corpus of his writings, not in isolation from or as exceptions to the rest of it—and, above all, should be taught in the context of the general tenets of American Transcendentalism. Except for "The Succession of Forest Trees" and "The Dispersion of Seeds" (treating "Dispersion" as a long essay), the so-called natural history essays are unimpressive as science or even as natural history *per se*: they don't "fit." Again except for "Succession" and "Dispersion," they would have no legitimate place in a course on natural history, ecology, or any other science—nor in a course on the history of science, biology, or ecology. As works of literature, however, they are exemplary.

Thoreau insisted that he was "a mystic, a transcendentalist, and a natural philosopher." We should take him at his word. James Russell Lowell asserts that Thoreau's "whole life was a search for the doctor. The old mystics had a wiser sense [than he] of what the world was worth." Lowell also claimed that Thoreau had "discovered nothing." But Thoreau's life—which is so vividly recorded and reflected in his writings—cannot be so cavalierly dismissed, and when Thoreau did assume a scientific stance (as in "Succession" and "Dispersion") he actually did *discover* facts and did enunciate a scientific *theory*.

Rather than a failed "search for the doctor," Thoreau's life was a perennial quest for the sublime: "[T]o be always on the alert to find God in nature," he says, "to know his lurking-places, to attend all the oratorios, the operas, of nature." Had Thoreau been an "orthodox" Christian and not an "infidel," he might have said with the Psalmist, "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, So panteth my soul after thee, O God." The natural history essays should be read as records of a spiritual quest, as episodic religious pilgrimages, even "Succession" and "The Dispersion of Seeds."

Thoreau did not describe himself as a social critic or political philosopher, but he did say, "The ethical philosopher needs the discipline of the natural philosopher. He approaches the study of mankind with great advantages who is accustomed to the study of nature."

At first glance the "political" essays do not seem to be part of any religious quest. They can be accommodated, however, if we realize that a quest has three components: the seeker, the sought, and the process of seeking (the search itself). In Thoreau's



case, as with most mystics, the quest is a one-on-one proposition; it is the individual soul that “panteth after [God];” thus, the individual is the inviolable foundation of Thoreau’s ethics. Each individual soul counts in the overall “scheme” of things, spiritual and mundane. An injustice against even one innocent individual is thus an assault on all morality. It is this realization that motivated Thoreau’s political pronouncements, from “Civil Disobedience” to “A Plea for Captain John Brown.”

Thoreau did not resort to chapels or churches, temples, mosques, or cathedrals, but “rambled to pine groves, standing like temples, . . . shrines [he] visited both summer and winter.” Thus, it was of paramount importance that there *be* pine groves in which to worship and encounter the Deity. It was his realization in 1856, which he eventually pursued with vigor in 1860, that forest succession—the natural rebuilding of the desecrated “temples” and “shrines” that he had visited for spiritual succor—would bring back into being groves and entire forests. It was this realization that drove his efforts to understand forest succession and that gave him hope. It was the solitude granted the individual spiritual seeker that commended wildness to Thoreau—groves and woods and pathless forests—in which to apprehend the Ancient One.

## American Literature Association Panels for 2006

The Thoreau Society will, as usual, sponsor two panels at the annual meeting of the American Literature Association. The meeting this year is May 25-28 in San Francisco. For further details, consult the ALA website: [http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/english/ala2/american\\_literature\\_2004.html](http://www.calstatela.edu/academic/english/ala2/american_literature_2004.html)

### Session 1: “Speaking Nature without Metaphor: Words and Things in the American Renaissance”

**Chair: Noelle Baker, Independent Scholar**

1. “Thoreau, Susan Fenimore Cooper, and the Quest to Fasten Words to Visible Things,” Rochelle Johnson, Albertson College of Idaho
2. “Walden by Haiku,” Ian Marshall, Penn State Altoona
3. “Romantic Analogies,” Jennifer Baker, Yale University

### Session 2: Round Table on “Teaching Transcendentalism: Problems and Possibilities”

**Moderator: Laura Dassow Walls, University of  
South Carolina**

1. Joel Myerson, University of South Carolina
2. Phyllis Cole, Penn State Delaware County
3. David M. Robinson, Oregon State University
4. Barbara Packer, University of California Los Angeles
5. Ronald A. Bosco, University at Albany, SUNY

## Thoreau Society Sessions at the 2005 MLA Conference

The following are abstracts of papers presented at the Thoreau Society sessions at the Modern Language Convention, Washington DC, December 2005. For more information, contact Sandy Petrulionis ([shp2@psu.edu](mailto:shp2@psu.edu)) or Laura Dassow Walls ([WallsLD@gwm.sc.edu](mailto:WallsLD@gwm.sc.edu)).

### Session 1: Manifest Destiny

#### Kristen L. Fresonke (Adelphi University): “Facing East from California’s Shores”

When does a Transcendentalist sound like Andrew Jackson? The answer is, all the time, and particularly when he writes about the American West. What we discover in looking at those New England writers with claims to individualism and a philosophical version of the still, small voice is that their writings and most of their thinking about western lands are not new thoughts about new lands by new man, but a concerted reaction to Jacksonian politics; they offer the kind of critique that is entirely sanctioned by the dominant political culture. Their reaction may offer special pleading and claims of a New England difference, but it has limited success in distancing itself from the monolithic political movement of the 1830s and 40s, namely the expansionist Democratic party. Transcendentalism, when it comes to the American West, is more co-opted than clean. If we’re going to revise the reputations of Emerson and Thoreau yet again, then most likely they’re going to end up looking like party hacks. Examples from Emerson’s *Nature* and Thoreau’s *Walden* can steer us toward an understanding of this position; and another writer about the American West, not ideologically committed or deceived as these two canonical figures are, can tell us still more. That writer is Eunice Beecher, wife of Henry Ward Beecher, sister in law to Harriet Beecher Stowe. She did what the Sage of Concord, and the Head Librarian of Walden Pond, did not do: she lived out west. She is the only figure near or within Transcendentalist circles to regard seriously the meaning of the East from the vantage of the West; she faced not the glorious West of Whitman’s poem, dreaming of greater westward advances, but looked back at the East from a wretched position out west, longing to return.

#### Anne Baker (North Carolina State University): “Fremont, the West, and Thoreau’s Transcendental Geography”

From the early days of the new republic through much of the nineteenth century, geographical knowledge and nation formation were inextricably connected in the United States. The nation’s first geographer, Jedediah Morse, believed that geographical information would “impress the minds of American Youth with an idea of the superior importance of their own country, as well as . . . attach them to its interests.” And as the nation expanded in the following decades, enormously popular narratives of surveying and mapping played a critical role in stirring up popular support for annexation. No mapping narrative was more widely read than John C. Fremont’s *The Exploring Expedition to the Rocky Mountains and to Oregon and N. California* (1845), in which



Fremont combines technical descriptions of the mapping process with literary (if clichéd) and allusive verbal landscapes.

This paper analyzes the nationalist dimensions of Fremont's narrative, which helped create popular support for the Mexican War, and argues that Thoreau's surveying of mapping of the pond in *Walden* is a pastiche of Fremont's mapping of Salt Lake. To recognize that episode of *Walden* as a response to Fremont, I argue, sheds new light on Thoreau's attitudes toward the nation-state, as well as the way in which his survey of the pond constitutes a protest against the nationalist ends that mapping served. Where the authors of government-sponsored mapping expeditions see their surveys as steps toward the fulfillment of national destiny, Thoreau sees his as the culminating moment in the Transcendentalist project of identifying and renewing human connections to the natural world.

**Robert Scholnick (College of William and Mary): "In the Proleptic Mode: The Transcendentalists, Manifest Destiny, and the 'Code of the Nation'"**

Focusing on his 1844 lecture "The Young American," this paper argues that Emerson was an advocate of that complex of ideas and national policies that we have come to call "Manifest Destiny." Emerson delivered "The Young American" in Boston on February 7, 1844 to the Mercantile Library Association, a literary, cultural, and social organization supported by the city's young clerks and apprentices. Seeking to inspire his audience to think of themselves at "young Americans" rather than Bostonians or New Englanders and to participate in the settlement of the West, Emerson uses prolepsis to promote continental expansion: "To men legislating for the area betwixt the snows and the tropics, somewhat of the gravity of nature will infuse itself into the code." While the word "code" refers to legislation, Emerson's range of references is much wider, to the set of deep inner instructions that guide national development. Emerson makes manifest what he calls the "sublime and friendly Destiny" that guides American expansion, making it "the country of the future." Although the proposed annexation of Texas as a slave state was the pressing event before the public, Emerson refused to speak out, but noted cynically in his diary not long after delivering "The Young American" that "It is very certain that the strong British race which have now overrun so much of this continent, must also overrun [Texas] & Mexico & Oregon also, and it will in the course of ages be of small import by what particular occasions & methods it was done. It is a secular question." New Englanders might well protest, but such protests would accomplish little (*JMN*, 9:74). Further, in "The Young American" Emerson specifically declined to urge his audience to commit themselves to the antislavery struggle, since each of us has his or her "proper work" to accomplish. Thoreau did attack the Mexican War in "Resistance to Civil Government," delivered on January 26, 1848, but at that point the war would be over in a week, on February 2. He famously spent a night in jail in 1846, but there is no evidence that he did so to protest the Mexican War. I discuss expressions of support for Manifest Destiny by other important American writers, including Whitman and Melville. Frederick Douglass correctly observed that few American politicians or writers would contest Polk's imperialist war, begun as it was on the basis of manipulated "intelligence." Here I note several political leaders and writers who did speak out

on the carnage and devastation visited upon Mexico, and ask what new national "code" would be born of Manifest Destiny.

**Cheryl J. Fish (Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY): "Encountering Hybridity and Manifest Destiny: Margaret Fuller and America in Transition in 1843"**

For Margaret Fuller, traveling in the summer of 1843 to the American West (Illinois, Michigan etc.) was an opportunity for self development as well as part of her elite education, a substitute for the desired but deferred tour of Europe. After stints as a teacher, tutor and editor, as well as helping to care for her family after her father's death, Fuller was ready for something new. Forced by circumstances to go west into "nature" instead of east into "culture," she fashioned a hybrid form of American travel writing, based partly in European and Romantic ideas but also informed by the tragedy of Native American removal and the hardships faced by frontier women. Summer on the Lakes in 1843 (referred to hereafter as *SL*) is what I am calling a poetic ethnography, transcending the travelogue through its blend of autobiography, history, critical reading and gender and race-based analysis of the tragedy and promise of western expansion and the dominant belief in manifest destiny. I shall read Fuller's published narrative along with letters she wrote to Emerson and other friends and journal entries from this time to register the pressure of genre and a number of ambivalent moments in Fuller's life as she negotiated between public and private selves; her anxieties are often displaced or embedded in a discourse of loss we find throughout *SL*.

For Fuller, hybridity and transitions indicate the promise of new energy and suggest the value of difference as well as the threat of change. These processes are indicative of Fuller's search for a position from which to write; she manipulates disjunctive discourses to articulate her mobile subjectivity as a form of evolving national and personal identity.

I shall discuss how scientific theories of racial mixing informed her vision of self and others as she moved and documented the changing American landscapes. In her letters and journals from this period, she more explicitly registers her ambivalence about being a tourist, writer, and worker as she faced anxieties about money and vocation at the same time the west was being changed by an influx of immigrants, racial mixing, and land grabbing. I refer to three women whose "case studies" Fuller wove into her published account: Fanny P., Mariana, and the Seeress of Prevorst. They are keys to understanding Fuller's use of hybridity; I read the excessiveness that she attributes to them as a cultural critique through which she envisions a more enlightened and ethical American self. I link these women to Fuller's contradictory position on Native Americans, her rejection of the ideas of sexual amalgamation, and her growing desire to divest herself of European influences in order to become amore integrated American subject.

Fuller envisioned the ample fields and vast prairies that she encountered in the summer of 1843 (that were already being changed by settlers) as part of the terrain from which a particularly American form of genius would eventually emerge. However, through multiple displacements, including her attention to women's difficulty in adapting to the ruggedness of western life and the physical demands thrust upon them during emigration, and backdrop of Native American culture that was disrupted by the very expansion that Fuller found so repugnant



and yet so compelling, Fuller wonders how women could achieve balance between mind and body with the impractical education they had received and the rigid gender codes prescribed for them.

Thus, this talk will elaborate on the various transitions, quests and displacements that were enacted by Fuller in the process of travel and travel writing about the West, American manifest destiny, and her own place as an American woman of letters.

### Session 2: "Writing Thoreau's Life: Circulating Myth and Memory"

#### Ivan Grabovac (University of British Columbia): "The Myth of Concord, or, Thoreau the Scapegoat"

The biographical discourse that circulated around the figures of Emerson and Thoreau, especially after the latter's death, may be read as "mythology" in the sense of René Girard. Concord's identity was highly invested in Emerson, so much so that he was described as "contagious": others "imitated" his voice and gestures. Whereas everyone in the village was susceptible to this "unconscious imitation," however, Thoreau was singled out: his imitation of Emerson was described as the most extreme of all, which generated a certain amount of ridicule. More precisely, the ridicule directed at Thoreau drew much of its energy from the community's ambivalence toward Emerson himself. Emerson, however, was too prestigious to attack directly. He was attacked indirectly through his more vulnerable surrogate. Citing the contradictory emphasis of a number of contemporaries on Thoreau's "uncanny, subordinate resemblance" to Emerson—and the "essential difference" between the two men—I argue that Thoreau was produced as the scapegoat for Emerson while Emerson was produced as the model for the community, its most "representative man."

#### Audrey Raden (The Graduate School, CUNY): "As Long As She Cracks She Holds": The Text of Thoreau's Death

Thoreau's "beautiful death" is one of the great stories of American literary history. All accounts of his contemporaries, at a time when a "triumphant death" was a significant ambition, are filled with wonder and admiration that we, with a very different culture of death, can share. In this paper I suggest that there is a continuum from Thoreau's written texts to his death, and one can read his experience of his own death as his final creative text. The paper examines how Thoreau integrated the antebellum death culture into his understanding of nature, culture, and his own private experience, most significantly in the sense that "holy dying" was a signifier of "holy living." The paper reads the story of Thoreau's deathbed against several studies of antebellum deathways and discusses how both Thoreau and his most significant eulogizers—Emerson and his sister Sophia in particular—integrated the cultural imperatives of a good death with the fact of Thoreau's tragically early death.

#### Ruffin Bailey (University of South Carolina): "Alternative Fruits, Tints of a Postgendered Thoreau"

Thoreau's gender has garnered great attention. Unfortunately the discussion remains anachronistically mired in the taxonomies of twentieth century modernism. This is regrettable, as the alternative fruits of Thoreau's late nature writings offer a clear, nonmodern alternative to the constricting dichotomy of current discourse.

Attempting to compel an identity bound to sexuality, current scholarship has ranged from unsuccessful heterosexual synecdoche built around a youthful romance and proposal to Ellen

Sewall to attempts to produce a homosexual Thoreau based on unduly foregrounded homoeroticism in his journals. This uncertainty has allowed the production of Thoreaus as diverse as an archetypally oppressive middle-class, heterosexual founding father of American nature writing to an ahistorical proponent of a distinctly queer politics.

That Thoreau fits into exactly none of--nor any combination of--modernist gender categories is paradoxically enlightening. Lost in the dialogue are the affinities of Thoreau's late nature writings with postmodern, postgendered metaphors, particularly Donna Haraway's cyborg, and a comparison of Haraway's cyborg to the alternative fruits of "Autumnal Tints" and "Wild Apples" proves surprisingly successful. In these essays, Thoreau aligns himself with images of thawed apples and red maple leaves, each without literal, conventional worth or reproductive value. By remythologizing these alternative fruits, a well-developed, alternative, nonmodern sexuality is revealed. These fruits provide a new picture, a fair reading of Thoreau's sexuality that eliminates the previously confusing fluidity of his possible gender roles.

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## Notes From Concord

*Jayne Gordon, Executive Director*

The educational DVD-ROM *Life With Principle* will be ready for schools, libraries and other organizations in May, with a home DVD edition to follow later in the year. The \$250 version, with full site license, can be previewed on the [www.lifewithprinciple.org](http://www.lifewithprinciple.org) website trailer. Components fall into three main categories:

**The film content:** the main film, *Life With Principle: Thoreau's Voice in our Time*, which introduces Thoreau's writings through interviews and footage of contemporary dilemmas and decisions, plus bonus features—documentaries on Thoreau's Concord, Civil Disobedience, World Leaders and an animated short.

**The DVD-ROM content:** a Study Guide to the film and a complete Thoreau curriculum in the same six sections as the film (*Hearing that Different Drummer; Being Awake, Aware, and Alive; Examining Desperate and Deliberate Lives; Living in Society; Living in Nature; Confronting the Mean and the Sublime*); historical commentary, the *Thoreau Society Bulletins* with a guide to best articles for classroom use and a link to Thoreau's writings which can be downloaded (**The Life With Principle website: [www.lifewithprinciple.org](http://www.lifewithprinciple.org)**), which allows teachers, students, librarians, media specialists, and program facilitators to do further investigations, and collect additional resources, as we continually add to the supplementary materials and links. It will give all people using the DVD the ability to share ideas for approaches and activities with people all over the world. It is the part of the DVD which can continually be updated and expanded.

We need your help and support. You can participate in our **Henry DVD Thoreau** initiative: give the DVD as a gift to your town library or local high school or college to honor a favorite teacher or person who exemplifies the spirit of Thoreau. Special bookplates will be created to ensure this permanent association and all the gifts will be profiled in future editions of the *Thoreau Society Bulletin*. Our great strength as an organization lies in our ability to be everywhere that *you* are! Contact us to get involved: [info@thoreausociety.org](mailto:info@thoreausociety.org) or copy and fill out the form on page 13 and send it to us.

You can become involved in this project in many ways, as have so many of your fellow members throughout our work with producer Melvyn Hopper. Use it in your classrooms, facilitate community programs or contribute material to the *Life With Principle* website. Encourage your colleagues to spread the word about this project that furthers the mission of the Society to stimulate interest in and foster education about Thoreau's ideas. Contact businesses and foundations in your hometown to underwrite distribution of the DVD to area schools and libraries, or host a gathering in your home to introduce the DVD to potential sponsors.

In Thoreau's own hometown, many programs are planned for this spring: *Where is Wildness?* (May 3, 10, 17) and *Trailing Thoreau* (May 6, 13), both in conjunction with Concord-Carlisle Adult and Community Education, as well as *Being Alive!* (May 2, 9) with DeCordova Museum. We have renewed our lease for the Shop at Walden Pond and are busy planning both the *Window on*

*Walden* author series for the Shop and the *Friends of Walden Pond* activities. FOWP money, matched by a grant from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, will rehabilitate the bathhouse and pay for new interpretive signage to better serve visitors to the Pond. We continue to work closely with the Thoreau Farm Trust on their fundraising efforts so that preservation work can begin on Thoreau's first home and our future one. And we are putting everything in place for the Annual Gathering, where I look forward to seeing so many of you as always. It's my favorite time of the year in Concord.

## *From Mike Frederick, Program Specialist and Webmaster*

Since last July, our websites, including the Thoreau Society Homepage and the Shop at Walden Pond store, have undergone considerable renovation. The updated Homepage includes easier site navigation, a "News and Events" section, a Flash slideshow, and other enhancements. Our membership slide show, in fact, has contributed to a steady influx of new memberships and renewals. We continue to improve the usefulness of the site through your recommendations and as a way to foster what Henry may have termed, "internal improvements," based on outreach initiatives.

The ease of membership renewal and shopping experience overall has been bolstered by the addition of a new e-commerce site. Our upgrade consists of the latest e-commerce technology and techniques for a standardized experience consistent with the best online stores. Credit card orders are securely processed, as always, using our secure SSL certificate, which provides industry-standard data encryption of information transferred from your computer to the website.

There are also several behind-the-scenes updates. We now have the ability to begin affiliate programs, whereby anyone with a website can setup referral links to us and receive a small commission on every purchase originating from the referring site. To become an affiliate, please email [affiliates@shopatwaldenpond.org](mailto:affiliates@shopatwaldenpond.org).

Another enhancement is the ability for Thoreau Society members to save 10% off every store order. At [www.shopatwaldenpond.org](http://www.shopatwaldenpond.org), add an item to your Shopping Cart, and enter the following coupon code, good throughout the year: mem1793. Remember, every dollar spent at the eStore supports our Mission.

Those interested in education outreach particularly should frequently visit [www.lifewithprinciple.org](http://www.lifewithprinciple.org), which is being rapidly developed for the release of the *Life with Principle* DVD. If you are interested in running a program for your school, organization, place of business, or community, please contact me at [mike.frederick@thoreausociety.org](mailto:mike.frederick@thoreausociety.org) to discuss the latest details. We welcome your ideas and encourage feedback because there are as many possibilities for DVD programming as there can be drawn radii from one centre.

## *From Jim Hayden, Retail Manager*

Throughout the fall and winter, The Shop at Walden Pond hosted weekend afternoon programs with various authors who have written on Thoreau, his works and ideas, or simply been inspired by him, as part of the *Window on Walden* Series. We were pleased



to host Eric Pinder (*North to Katahdin*), Thomas Rain Crowe (*Zoro's Field*), Ron Bosco (Editor of *Thoreau on the Seasons*), D. B. Johnson (*Henry Works*), Lawrence Buell (*The American Transcendentalists, Essential Writings*) and just recently, Jane Brox (*Clearing Land, Legacies of the American Farm*).

We are happy to announce that we have autographed copies of all of these books on hand in the Shop and through our e-commerce site. We have built strong ties with these authors and will hopefully be doing more programming with them in the future. Their writings are important, and we are happy to be able to present them in the Shop. Many of them will also be at the Annual Gathering Author Signing this July.

We also are working with area artists, writers and businesses to develop new merchandise, and many of them are going to be creating exclusive items for the Thoreau Society, with special offer links and services.

At the Pond, the peepers are out, trees are budded and some early blooms are open. More and more visitors are breaking the quiet solitude, and the Shop is gearing up to help visitors understand more about Thoreau, his message and his legacy.

This season there will be many new products, books, clothing, educational children's toys and books and more! If you can't stop by, check out the website. We will also be announcing exciting new items via email to all registered members, and you can always call any of us at the Shop during regular hours.

In closing, remember, the Shop at Walden Pond is an important part of the Thoreau Society. Between the Shop and the e-commerce site, we depend on the income to continue our mission. If you are looking for a present for a graduation or other event, give us a call. We can suggest some of our products and help you give that special person a great gift from Walden Pond while you support the Thoreau Society.

## Notes & Queries

•We are grateful to the authors who contributed articles for this number of the Bulletin. **Phil Howerton** is a graduate instructor and doctoral candidate at the University of Missouri-Columbia. **Edmund A. Schofield** is a botanist and Director of Education at Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, Mass. **Leslie Perrin Wilson** is the Curator of Special Collections at the Concord Free Public Library.

•Individual subscriptions to *ESQ: A Journal of the American Renaissance* are normally US \$22 for one year and US \$40 for two years, but Thoreau Society members are eligible for a 20% discount. To order contact Tanya\_Gonzalez@wsu.edu; or *ESQ*, department of English, Washington State University, Pullman Washington 99164-5020 U.S.A.; or call 509.335.4816.

•We are indebted to **Chris Dodge** for the following items.

•A profile of author/child psychiatrist Robert Coles in the January 2006 issue of Buddhist magazine *Shambhala Sun* ("Robert Coles and the Moral Life," by David Swick) reports, "Growing up, Coles would often hear his parents reading to each other. Tolstoy, Hardy, Eliot, Emerson, Thoreau: they regarded these writers as friends helping them find a moral path through life."

•At about 3:45 p.m. on 1/11/06, a Minnesota Public Radio broadcaster quoted Henry David Thoreau's poetic line

"There enter moments of an azure hue" to introduce news of Swedish opera singer's Birgit Nilsson death and funeral. (Her funeral was held 1/11.).

•Issue #65 of John Porcellino's mini-comic King-Cat Comics and Stories includes a list titled "Sooper Size King-Cat Top Forty, Fall '04 to Fall '05"—mostly naming films and music John Porcellino has enjoyed. On his list of items that don't fit the films and music category: 11. Thinking about Thoreau.

•From "Eulogy on William Apress: His Writerly Life and His New York Death," in Robert Warrior's *The People and the Word: Reading Native Nonfiction* (University of Minnesota Press, 2006): "What an exciting time it must have been for a writer like Apress to witness the wholesale changes taking place in the intellectual currents of the United States . . . The was the era of Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, and Herman Melville. New England had its share of formidable intellects, including Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. . . ."

•Gregory Orfalea's *The Arab Americans: A History* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2006) describes 1979 U.S. Senate debate around an amendment offered by Mark Hatfield that represented "the first time a reduction in aid tied to Israeli policies was to be voted on" by the Senate. "Out a sense of frustration over Hatfield's defeat," Orfalea states, "I wrote a paper, which quoted Thoreau, who had refused to pay taxes over the Mexican War a century before, and demonstrated that on average each American taxpayer was offering Israel \$37 a year, more than it [sic] gave its own government for mass transit (\$17), higher education (\$32) and urban renewal (\$15)."

The book's index also shows a Thoreau entry for page 423, but I found this on page 422: "After all my travels, the central paradox of the Arab Americans still stood: they could be so exceptionally individual and yet so collectively anonymous. How ever fecund they found American values of self-reliance, with notable exceptions—Ralph Nader, the Monsour brothers of Pittsburgh, Sammie Abbott, for example—they often stopped short of dissent. They took to Thoreau's pond but not his jail."

•A short essay by Garret Keizer in the January 2006 issue of Vermont Commons examines the question of whether Vermonters are as fiercely independent "as its citizens imagine." The piece is titled "A Not So Different Drummer."

•The editor's note by Debra Shore in the Winter 2006 issue of *Chicago Wilderness* describes (and pictures) the small brown notebook in which Shore entered records of books she read over the course of 33 years. Telling stories, Shore writes, is how humans build culture. "Henry David Thoreau's account of his solitary experiment living in the woods, published as *Walden* in 1854, became a centerpiece of American literature—and changed the culture."

Visit the Society's e-commerce site  
[www.shopatwaldenpond.org](http://www.shopatwaldenpond.org)



## Walden's Use in the Past

# Old Folks' Picnic.

A Grand gathering of the lovers of ANCIENT SACRED  
MUSIC, will be held at

LAKE WALDEN, . . . CONCORD, MASS.

On Wednesday, Sept. 13th, 1876.

For the purpose of uniting in a

Grand Old Folks' Sing,

And a general GOOD TIME. An invitation is hereby extended to all who love the Music of our Grand-Fathers, in its original purity, to attend.

The Exercises will consist of a Great OLD FOLKS' CONCERT, to be given at *Two o'clock*, P. M., under the direction of "FATHER WARE," assisted by an Orchestra under the Venerable "GRANDSIRE BALDWIN," who will preside at the "GREAT FIDDLE."

All who attend are earnestly requested to bring *Books* with them, as far as it may be possible to do so;—either "Continental Harmony," "Father Kemp's Book," "Ancient Harmony Revived," "American Vocalist," or some other book containing the "Old Tunes."

Come, and let us have a "Good Time."

All Societies intending to attend the Concert should notify the Superintendent of the Fitchburg Railroad, Boston, Mass. on or before Monday, Sept. 4th next, stating at which Station they will take the Cars, and the probable number of persons, that ample accommodations may be provided.

Full particulars in future bills.

"GRANDSIRE" BALDWIN, MANAGER.

## FITCHBURG RAILROAD

### ROUND-TRIP EXCURSION TICKETS,

Including admission to the Grove, can be procured at the several Stations named below, at the following prices:

Boston, Charlestown, Union Sq., Somerville, Cambridge, Belmont & Waverley, 75 cts.; Waltham 55; Stony Brook 50; Lincoln and Concord. 25; Concord Junct. 40; South & West Acton, 50; Littleton 60; Ayer Junct. 65; Shirley, 70; Leominster 75; Fitchburg 85; Watertown 75; Maynard 60; Rockbottom and Hudson, 70; Marlboro' 80; West Groton, 70; Townsend Harbor, Townsend Centre and West Townsend 75; Greenville 85.

C. L. HEYWOOD, Supt.

Boston, Aug. 24th, 1876.



## Additions to the Thoreau Bibliography

Robert N. Hudspeth

- Buell, Lawrence. "Downwardly Mobile for Conscience's Sake: Voluntary Simplicity from Thoreau to Lily Bart." *American Literary History* 17, No. 4 (Winter 2005): 653-665.
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- Dean, Bradley P. "Science, Poetry, and 'Order among the Clouds': Thoreau and Luke Howard." *Thoreau Society Bulletin* No. 253 (Fall 2005): 1-5.
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- Henry, Lana. "Healing America on the Altar of Home: The Folklore and Sacred Work of Homemaking in Thoreau, Jewett, and Steinbeck." *Dissertation Abstracts International* 65, No. 11 (May 2005): 4198.
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- Peck, H. Daniel. "Thoreau's Lakes of Light: Modes of Representation and the Enactment of Philosophy in *Walden*." *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 28 (2004): 85-101.
- . "Unlikely Kindred Spirits: A New vision of Landscape in the Works of Henry David Thoreau and Asher B. Durand." *American Literary History* 17, No. 4 (Winter 2005): 687-713. On the relationship between Thoreau's journal and Durand's plein air oil sketches.
- Porte, Joel. *Consciousness and Culture: Emerson and Thoreau Reviewed*. Reviewed by Joseph Kronick in *New England Quarterly* 78, No. 3 (September 2005): 453-455.
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- Taylor, B. P. "Henry Thoreau and the Natural Life." *Organization & Environment* 18, No. 2 (June 2005): 235-240.

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Established in 1941, the **Thoreau Society, Inc.**, is an international nonprofit organization with a mission to honor Henry David Thoreau by stimulating interest in and fostering education about his life, works, and philosophy and his place in his world and ours; by encouraging research on his life and writings; by acting as a repository for Thoreauviana and material relevant to Henry David Thoreau; and by advocating for the preservation of Thoreau Country. Membership in the Society includes subscriptions to its two publications, the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (published quarterly) and *The Concord Saunterer* (published annually). Society members receive a ten-percent discount on all merchandise purchased from the Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond and advance notice about Society programs, including the Annual Gathering.

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Please submit items for the Summer Bulletin to your editor before

1 July 2006

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